Televisual Memory and the Telescoping Fire Station: Landscape as Media-Memory Site

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Abstract

‘Landscape’ is an active site of occurrence—a platform of media-influenced exchange. Reflected through televisual language, it offers a relative experience, tied to our sense of geography, time and shifting notions of history. *The Cascade - Moments in the Televisual Desert* engages TV-inflected landscape as a permeating condition. In this telescoping space, landscape conflates time and memory, location and topography, television and reality.

Rooted in a personal connection to Southern California, which permeates American television from the 1960s-80s, I hunt, excavate and deploy conceptual instances of the Mojave Desert and its entanglement with the real, the vividly scripted and the iconic. Mediated by television, Los Angeles County becomes mercurial, behaving as stage and script, environment and blueprint—a mythic, cultural hunting ground. This transitory televisual landscape informs our understanding of place and event, blurring fiction and fact. *The Cascade* arrests this instability as an interdisciplinary investigation: a hot-and-cool mosaic that asks viewers to seek, receive and connect.

Derived from a body of moments excavated from television, *The Cascade* suspends semi-narrative traces as elements removed from their physical location by the original filming and further removed by capturing and mutating temporal instants. The environments thus inhabit the actual, the imagined and the transient place of recollection—a collapsed space conflating personal history, geologic reality and cultural production. Using layers as an economical mode of storytelling (focused on suspension in the moment), I compress events and location into a system of surface-screens: layers
provide non-linear depth and conversations between media offer different modes of viewing and consuming.
Introduction

Through my multimedia work, *The Cascade – Moments in the Televisual Desert*, I offer a meta-narrative of the television mosaic and the act of watching and remembering. Populated by a vulnerable recast of heroes engaged in a kind of primal forensics, an endless hunt plays out across time-compressed paintings, through active, audio-infused videos, and via digital montage. Viewers (and characters) investigate this unstable environment, traveling between media, events and their realizations. There is a pervading sense of *déjà vu*—such that television becomes its own self-haunting specter.

Television is part of our working memory-experience, blended with the ‘actual’ to form a ‘hyper-actuality,’ linked to experience and place.¹ TV itself enables an image of culture and history as an “assemblage of dissembled distances from the instantaneous present,” but the present is always rebuilding itself, revitalizing the once-old (Dienst 78), just as television cannibalizes its own history in a continuous present.² The space between the original filming, its presentation as cultural object, its excavation and manipulation, and its relation to past-present-future are part of this telescoping space. My installation is a way of enabling the elusive hunt, of sculpting the media-inflected landscape itself—taking it and its cast of characters out of the living room and into an elastic convergence—

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¹ Philosopher Gilles Deleuze proposes that “when a film returns us to the scene of a room and we recall simultaneously another scene that took place there, there is an overlay of present and recalled, real and virtual, as if facets of a single image” (Deleuze qted. in Farr 23). Though Deleuze saw this in cinema, I suggest it also occurs in television and in our individual relationship to real and fictional spaces represented through image (moving and still).

² Archived and older television still exists with a strange vitality that eludes even classic cinema. The televisual past is renewed via the abundance and proliferation of specialized viewing (with growing veracity thanks to genre channels, Netflix and on-demand delivery). Television is a medium that contains its own history and frequently resurrects and cannibalizes it (Buonanno 21), thus televisual history is constantly mediated by viewing it in an endless present.
space. Theorists Byron Reeves and Clifford Nass claim “media equals real life…” that familiar, deflated distance between broadcast and reality: “knowing that fiction is fiction doesn’t stop the emotional brain from processing it as real…” (Gottschall 775).

Convergence-Hunters and the Bard of Late Modernity

Media influence our daily lives. The ubiquity of televisual media even impacts our process of self-shaping and our understanding of relational space-place. Artist Renee Green suggests “many people’s earliest recollections now include films and TV or films on TV... Memories include social and private recollections—how old I was, who I was with, where I was. Films themselves now serve an indexing function to assist in gaining access to memory” (53). As inhabitants of the ‘Information Age,’ our understanding of self, time, and location is interspersed with media.

TV provides a critical cultural component; a ubiquitous audio-visual language (Fiske 16)—considered by theorists to be a characteristic structure of late modernity itself

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3 The physical and conceptual nature of landscape is tied to ‘place’ and ‘space,’ equally multi-faceted concepts. Space can function as a measure of volume, void or perspective, an active conceptual event, a site of processing, or the distance between events and their interpretation (Richardson 62). What we experience as space is really a complex process of sensing and understanding (Paul 95), beyond geography or volumetric measurement. Place can similarly function as literal locations, suggestions on a map or virtual waypoints in a digital environment—while encompassing notions of identity and belonging (Ryan 1)(Richardson 63).

4 …concepts she actively investigates in her own work. Many of Green’s pieces, like Partially Buried in Three Parts (1995-97), start with a “genealogical trace” tied to the artist as individual, but which negotiate broader considerations of media as history, monument, and time (Green 50). For Green, this allows the viewer to regain access to past events, while considering the way media itself affects personal, social and cultural memory (53).
Most know how to ‘read’ TV, as we are culturally and socially primed to recognize and decode it, just as viewers were once primed to read paintings and theater as dominant, transmissive forms (Fiske 17). Thus, TV, the ‘unworthy’ subject, is both popular and pervasive, derided and centralized (Fiske 14), the bardic crier of modernity, master of re-context, cannibalization and remix—capable of renewing its own fragmented stories from a self-populated Celestial Jukebox, while communicating our cultural selves (Fiske 17, 85)(Buonanno 72).

TV also distorts our sense of the “situational geography” of social life, allowing us to be present at (and to remember) both real and fictional events that occur across vast and even imagined geographic locales (Buonanno 19). The limits of physical space no longer solely determine who we are, or what we remember. Dislocated televisual

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5 Often dismissed as a lowbrow medium, television nevertheless remains the “familiar and popular experience for a large proportion of people from all sections of life and society” (Fiske 14).

6 Early television audiences (1930s – early 1940s) were not yet culturally primed to ‘read’ television and had trouble understanding the difference between programs (Buonanno 32).

7 “Celestial Jukebox” stems from a 1995 US Government white paper concerning media flow and consumer access. The paper “invoked the image of a technology-packed satellite orbiting thousands of miles above earth, awaiting a subscriber’s order—like a nickel in the old jukebox, and the punch of a button to connect him to a vast storehouse of entertainment and information through a home or office receiver combining the powers of a television, radio, CD and DVD player, telephone, fax, and personal computer” (Goldstein 187). Theorists Paul Goldstein and Lawrence Lessig have broadened the idea, highlighting its relationship to data networking (Wasow). It not only describes services like Netflix, but also the Internet itself, encompassing a universe of information, image, sound, video, experience... It is new media theorist Lev Manovich’s ‘cultural database’ (“What Comes After…” 5) of the Information Age.

8 Maine artist Matthew Meyer had a connective familiarity with the California desert, as referenced in The Cascade... though he had never personally been there. His landscape-memory was informed (even created) by the site’s televisual presence. Thus, he related to my artwork and its referenced sites through a media-inflected personal filter. His associations with the area were mediated through the fabricated specter of popular culture, and this dimensional play between public and private memory is vital to The Cascade...
experiences transcend physical geography (Buonanno 86) and, in fact, “where TV confronts the real, or Being, it is no longer easy to say where real ends and the deviation, distortion or diffusion begins” (Dienst xii).\textsuperscript{9} These considerations are pivotal to \textit{The Cascade}, through which I ask what it means to view, consume and ‘recollect’ the fictive cum factual. Yet, for all its fabricated presence, recording and viewing television takes place in \textit{real space}, at real moments in time. A distinctive ‘real’ warrants deeper analysis, but Hollywood-fantasy takes place in a certain kind of ‘reality,’ yet draws no distinction between the \textit{actuality} of the real and unreal (Shutz, qtd. in Buonanno 75).\textsuperscript{10}

We live in an age of information. We have unprecedented access to data—all points in history and geography accessible, or conceivable, in a single click.\textsuperscript{11} As we encounter the data cascade, “each of us constructs our own personal mythology from bits and fragments of information extracted from the media flow… transformed into resources through which we make sense of our everyday lives” (Jenkins 3). Theorist Eli

\textsuperscript{9} The act of watching television “equates to an experience of mobility and dislocation between diverse places—one of them physical and one social” (Buonanno 19)—even remembered.

\textsuperscript{10} …even as the idea of the ‘real’ is a cultural construction itself (Fiske 160). Television theorists claim TV operates as one kind of reality, displacing other realities because it does not represent \textit{actuality} (Fiske 48). Computer-generated and digitally constructed environments also complicate the idea of ‘reality,’ but do not eradicate the documentary subtext of a work of Hollywood fiction. There is still a ‘real’ generated environment, though it may be composed of pixels or videotape, and there is a ‘real’ system of production and creation. Theorist Andre Bazin likewise suggests that with certain media, like Surrealist photographs, “the logical distinction between what is imaginary and what is real tends to disappear” (9), just as our brain’s recognition of the division between fact and fantasy blurs when engaging stories (Gottschall 775).

\textsuperscript{11} Theorist Alan Kirby calls this a rupture of existing cultural relationships: “Digimodernism identifies as the critical event in contemporary culture the profound and shattering encounter between computerization and the text. Its most recognizable form is a new kind of digitized textuality—onward, haphazard and evanescent—that disrupts traditional ideas about authorship and reading…” I would argue that it explodes the broader concept of “text” itself, with things like the re-orientation of the idea of the original (Jarvis) and the strange collapse of all eras of information and all geographic locations into a binary-based, digitized environment.
Pariser refers to this media flow as a “unique universe of information for each of us” (9). Within this ‘universe,’ the TV-mediated landscape becomes elastic; each viewer navigates their own media wormhole, their own mythology.

‘Convergence Culture,’ posited by Henry Jenkins, also addresses this paradigm (243): “convergence represents a cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content… spectators perform in the new media system” (3). ‘Convergence’ identifies a participatory philosophy, the fractured nature of parallel but separate realities, and the ability of culture recipients to find and forge personal mythologies from an information stream (Jenkins 3). The convergence-hunter is really a reframed primal hunter, who perceives, collects and relates “tiny details” that “provide the key to a deeper reality, inaccessible by other methods” beyond hunting and converging (Ginzburg 11). Humans are storytelling hunters, the details of our ‘prey’ submerged in a stew of fact and fiction (Gottschall 47) (Ginzburg 12). Early humankind survived by hunting and “in the course of endless pursuits, hunters learned to construct the appearance and movements of an unseen quarry through its tracks… to give meaning and context to the slightest trace…” (Ginzburg 12).

In this case, the quarry is story, and the tracks are the divergent, composite bits we gather from the media flow (Gottschall 93). The contemporary convergence-hunter is a media

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12 Convergence Culture integrates media, data, art and styles—“convergence thinking is like interdisciplinary thinking” (Jenkins 12) and it invigorates media storytelling.

13 According to theorists like Carlo Ginzburg, “the hunter could have been the first to ‘tell a story’ because only hunters knew how to read a coherent sequence of events from the silent (though not imperceptible signs left by their prey” (13).

14 Theorist Jonathan Gottschall suggest that the world of story, or Neverland, is humankind’s “evolutionary niche, our special habitat” (2051).
detective and artists, as agents of convergence, are cultural DJs, leading to “a kind of hunter-gatherer milieu…” (Miller).

In fact, Convergence Culture is a ‘cool’ framework and television a ‘cool’ medium (Buonanno 72)(Dienst 12)(Fiske124)(McLuhan 22) because the viewer must do most of the work; “the screen supplies mere metonyms, we make them meaningful” (Fiske 123). The telephone, digital interactions\(^{15}\) and television are ‘cool media’ while radio, cinema and paintings are ‘hot.’ ‘Hot media’ extend a single, consumed experience in high definition. A ‘cool medium’ requires viewer participation to negotiate material (McLuhan 22). We may consume television, but we must remember, process and relate episodes, often out of order (Fiske 123-4),\(^ {16}\) merging information across moments, weeks, even years. Ultimately, TV forces us to do.\(^ {17}\) As a dynamic myth-maker (Fiske 87), television constitutes a “world [which] promises immediacy and immensity, where all possible subjects and objects are co-present to each other,” (Dienst 4), leaving the viewer to perform as a ‘convergence-hunter,’ gathering media and stories, linking elements and experiences—mimicking the mosaic of television in the very act of weaving personal mythologies. This mosaic\(^ {18}\) is rooted in television’s fractured, unresolved nature (Dienst 3, 29)(Fiske 125).\(^ {19}\)

\(^{15}\) The internet, smartphones, video games, Smart TVs, networks, databases—anything along these lines.

\(^{16}\) The low-definition ‘cool’ is often incomplete, demanding further (sometimes literal) interpretation of meaning from ‘fuzz’ (McLuhan 23).

\(^{17}\) Television’s message is made meaningful “only at the moment when the semiotic codes interlock with the cultural awareness supplied by the viewer, whose own context will play a part shaping that cultural awareness” (Fiske 123).

\(^{18}\) Contrary to the notion of TV as the ‘boob tube’ which requires minimal intelligence to engage, TV is actually “a demanding mode of communication” because it is disconnected, ephemeral and mosaic-like
If humans are storytelling animals (Gottschall 1060), television is the inheritor of oral tradition, embodying a massive pool of cultural myth (Fiske 125)(Buonanno 19). Viewers gain understanding of televisual events by cross-referencing information. We get a sense of who Jack Bauer is, not because of lengthy cinematic development, but because we experience and merge threads from 9 seasons of 24. This is similar to the way audiences understand the folktales of Odysseus or Coyote: tales (or episodes) need not be engaged in a ‘proper’ sequence to garner character and story. In this sense, TV is a fragmented, elusive and unresolved medium—characters resurface, stories recirculate, programs reincarnate (Dienst 3, 29). Because information is dispersed and television occupies living space, TV asks the audience to be the hunter and assembler of story.


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19 Television programs are fragmentary, interrupted by advertising, displaced by news and lost in re-broadcast. Television was originally divided as a way of commodifying and monetizing the real event of viewing—the progression of segmented time (Dienst 58-60). In so doing, it began to resemble the moment-to-moment storytelling of the past. Televisual time is capitalized time, time paradigmatically extended and broken (Dienst 161). We may not even have the luxury of viewing episodes in their ‘proper’ order, interrupted by work, family, technology, weather, even by mistake. This kind of “atomized viewing” is fundamental to the medium and my project (Dienst 63).

20 ...and we may even combine program knowledge with interviews, articles, websites, ads and memes that relate to the original, remade, or even fan re-cast story.

21 Television’s cool, metonymic role actually restores oral tradition as a unique, remixed mosaic.
Figure 1. The Cascade. Ren Adams. Variant installation view.

*The Cascade* installation (Fig. 1) collapses the essence of site into a single moment, producing directional entanglements where the past erupts into the present—mediated through landscape as an active site, and television as a dynamic platform.\(^2\) A combination of paintings, audio, videos on TV screens, digital images and View-Masters extend the television experience, providing different modes of access and consumption.\(^3\) Viewers exercise convergence-hunting as they negotiate the work and gain understanding of its sense of place, character and action. Elements bounce between media, with layers and loops serving a semi-narrative role, as time unfolds differently across each surface-screen. The TV heroes endlessly search, just as viewers hunt when entering the

\(^2\) The installation adapts to nearly any space, thus Fig.1 represents one possibility, including two of the paintings on paper, one television screen and two pedestals with plastic View-Masters, each offering an assortment of digitally-produced, interchangeable reels. In other arrangements, each video can be presented on its own wall-mounted television and paintings would be offset by digital stills on paper. Open audio is provided with a sound bar or television speakers.

\(^3\) The dialogue between installed media may lead viewers to question what it means to view, connect, consume and mythologize.
metonymic space: anxiety, doubt and denial of closure function as trespass into the strange topography of Hollywood. Considering television’s mosaic and its relationship to place and memory, I investigate what it means for site(s) to take on mythic roles as telescoping spaces. Each Cascade component is an ‘episode’ in the total installation, self-enclosed and ‘resolved’ as an individual unit (intentionally incomplete in narrative), but part of a larger conversation.

Televisual Memory and the Telescoping Fire Station: Landscape as Media-Memory Site

There are ‘wormholes’ in Southern California; space-time tunnels that link discrete points, fusing time with landscape, reality with the vividly scripted. Los Angeles County Fire Station 127 is one such distortion—the perfect metaphor for the conflation of time, place, memory and contingency I refer to as the ‘telescoping elastic-space’ of mediated landscape. Media impact individual, cultural and historical negotiations, affecting our understanding (and even recollection) of locative forces. Landscapes (interior-exterior) become dynamic memory-sites—platforms that condense our perception of time, history and place. This intensifies when landscapes are recognized or

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24 I mimic the mode of television (and memory), where spectators must unite parts of a fractured story, moment to moment, episode to episode, season to season.

25 It is “elastic” because it is capable of expanding, contracting, mutating and adjusting for each observer at different times, in different contexts. The telescoping reality of a location includes its physicality, temporality (simultaneous past, present and future as experienced by individuals and groups), its stories and associations.

26 The term ‘landscape’ is loaded, capable of describing everything from panoramas to political divisions. Invisible property lines, the carving of roads, cities, monuments—social and personal engagements with space-place all encompass what we understand as ‘landscape.’
remembered in (and through) television—referencing the way media\textsuperscript{27} informs our understanding of space-place, generating connections to distant or imaginary locations and events (Gottschall 93).

When we think of a specific, culturally mediated site—including settings only encountered via representation—we engage a spiral of temporality. The site is shaped by the mutable process of remembering and forgetting, by literal and virtual encounters. My engagement with the conceptual space-place of Los Angeles County and its entanglement with the real, the scripted and the mythologized considers landscape a functional site of cultural and geologic exchange.

\textsuperscript{27} Cinema also frames our understanding of location, identity—even ideology, but for this paper, I focus on televisual impact and television theory, especially given the vital differences between televisual and cinematic language and intent (Farr 23).
Figure 2. Los Angeles County Fire Station 127. *Emergency!* Season 2, Ep. 10, “Dinner Date” (1972). Still from *The Cascade*.

Figure 4. Station 51 (Station 127) articulated toy by Code 3 Fire Trucks, in the collection of the County of Los Angeles Fire Museum (Core).

Station 127 (Figs. 2-4) occupies a literal, physical location (2049 East 223rd St., Carson, California, 90810, 33.824812°N, -118.238301°W)—a duality of the real and the staged. In continuous operation since 1967, it also ‘performed’ as the fictional Station 51 on Emergency! (1972-1979), and its interior was replicated on a Universal sound stage, with part of the filming occurring on-site, part on a precision simulacrum (Yokley 102). Through syndication, the building became familiar to millions—spanning 129 episodes, 6 TV-movies, photographs, individual memories, the lives of stationed firefighters, actors and producers working at the site, the journeys of media pilgrims and locals, Google Street View archives, websites, home videos, even fanfiction, fanart, toys and The Cascade. The desert-urban space of the television program with its humble

28 Figures 2 & 3 represent the same architectural site, sourced from different media—television B-roll from an episode of Emergency! and Google Street View shot from 2011. I re-captured and re-present each image for The Cascade. Fig. 4 offers a small-scale simulacrum of the site; a toy that mimics the location down to the flags and grass.

29 An hour-long American drama produced by R.A. Cinader (Adam-12) and Jack Webb (Dragnet), which had measurable impact on the growth of emergency response programs (Yokley V-VI, 16-17). In recognition of the show’s effect on the medical industry, the Smithsonian inducted equipment (including the Bio Phone) into the National Museum of American History, a fascinating cross-over between the scripted, the iconically hyper-real and the nationalist narrative of the museum-archive (Yokley VI).

30 Television theorist Milly Buonanno suggests “media pilgrims travel to sites where TV was filmed. The visit can take on a ritual occasion. The rare opportunity to be physically present in the real place where TV was filmed” (79-80). Bridging this gap recognizes the poignancy of real-unreal relationships to location and the liminal spaces between fact, fiction and memory. Visiting the ‘real’ makes the fictional experience all the more real, even if the pilgrim knows the site is fictionalized.

31 Shows like Emergency! function as early forms of Google Street View; a proto-virtual database of streets and locations, ‘caught’ tangentially on tape (K. McCoy). The actual television footage becomes a semi-documentary process of space-time that reminds us the programs are shot in real, yet culturally mediated, space—and the ‘archive’ of our landscape extends beyond contemporary databases.
firehouse offers a mythologized America, an elastic platform affecting public understanding (and cultural memory) of the American medical system and greater Los Angeles. This reframed the region for locals, defining it for those who virtually experienced it. The real fire station with its televised depiction together form a perfect, semi-narrative wormhole.

Considering how TV-imprints affect memory, “scientists have discovered that the memories we use to form our own life stories are boldly fictionalized,” so distinctions between fact, fiction, memory and actuality are ambiguous at best (Gottschall 290). LA County Firefighter-Paramedic Jeff Brum describes his youthful fascination with Emergency!, suggesting it influenced his decision to become a paramedic. Later, Brum was actually stationed at 127 and lived a confluence of personal and televisual mythology. The physical reality “still looked like it did in the TV show,” yet Brum was now living the hyper-real by embodying a once-mythical media role in life, in the physical location where the show was filmed (Brum qtd. in Yokley 103-104). Television narratives have become part of our working memory-experience, blended with the actual to become a ‘hyper-actuality,’ like Brum’s experience, tied to perception and place.

32 Fan culture-hunters, like those at the Official Dwight Schultz Fansite, travel to locations captured in The A-Team (1983), also filmed in Los Angeles County. Fans journey (literally, or via Google Street View) to match television mythology to real sites, discovering which places still exist and which have undergone dramatic change (“Filming Locations”). They build an online, collaborative archive of material with hunted clues. For many, their only understanding, or at least their earliest understanding, of California comes from virtual representation. For those who live(d) there, before or after the original filming, the televisual information adds new storied detail to personal experience.
This phenomenon is not limited to a two-engine fire station. ‘Telescoping elastic-space’ can describe nearly any media-imprinted site. The Vasquez Rocks (Fig. 5)\textsuperscript{33} are another example, capable of referencing the collision of the personal-historical and the packaged nature of Hollywood experience. Google it and you find a wormhole of meta-referential material—screen captures from *Star Trek* “Arena,”\textsuperscript{34} *Star Trek the Next*

\textsuperscript{33} The Vasquez Rocks Natural Area Park is located in Agua Dulce, California (Los Angeles County). In addition to being a regional and tourist attraction, it spans the presence of several historical native populations and an 1874 association with bandit Tiburcio Vasquez, who used the site as a hideout (“Vasquez Rocks…”). The site has been used to film hundreds—possibly thousands—of television, film and advertising segments, such that many viewers are familiar with the strange, ‘alien’ rock formations without knowing whether they are real, or where they are actually located. All aspects of the rocks’ existence—from their prehistoric, geologic thrust to *Bill and Ted’s Bogus Journey* are part of its telescoping identity.

\textsuperscript{34} The infamous battle: Gorn vs. Kirk, referenced by nearly every appropriative television program out there.
Generation (meta-referencing “Arena”), The Big Bang Theory (referencing both), and numerous others, including MacGyver, Gunsmoke, CSI, The Greatest American Hero, even animated Family Guy. The Vasquez Rocks are part of a lived, regional experience, even as they embody a semi-fictional space which can be traveled to, but which requires some act of memory or fabrication to complete (making site function as a cool medium) (Fiske 124). In a sense, these memory-resident sites take on mythical roles (Bourriaud 97). Both fire station and rock formation embody telescoping space and their fractured overlays behave like the layered artifacts I manipulate in my work.

Television happens in (and affects) real space, in real time. The fire station is real. The rocks are real. They are subject to the passage of geologic time and human intervention. The TV shows in which they appear are also real—equally subject to change and human affect. Scholar Johanna Drucker suggests “every photograph has temporal dimensions... the time of exposure, historical time, time of development, cropping, the time of reception and circulation—like any other cultural artefact... caught

35 The Big Bang Theory characters operate within a fictional superstructure that recognizes both the ‘realness’ of the county park and the media-memory embedded in viewers, characters, and characters observed by characters. Thus, the fictive references the ‘realness’ of the site, the fiction of the TV-show-within-a-TV-show, and the framed, fictional version of the real Los Angeles County. This inspires a cascade of fan and cultural referents.

36 There are countless Hollywood references, including other programs I sampled for The Cascade. Beyond Hollywood, the site-referent deluge includes vacation photos, models, postcards, landscape photography, fan remakes of TV sequences, selfies, digital manipulations, satellite photos, pornography, paintings and advertising.

37 ...just as we attempt to complete televisual information.

38 In previous bodies of work, like the Archaeology of Being, I use layers to suggest deep space and coincident moments in time, burying visual clues (artifacts) in a surface that requires the viewer perform like an archaeologist, or detective, brushing away material to gain understanding. I apply this to The Cascade.
in a web of ‘varying temporalities’ (Drucker 23).” This also applies to television, which is composed of similar temporal dimensions, including the time it takes to film, edit, score, broadcast, syndicate, etc. TV shows are real things: composed of the tapes or files they are recorded on, the screens we view them on, the real imprint of memory and story—even if that ‘realness’ seems different than the substance of landscape. Thus, the image and its time-telescope becomes an experiential event. Every reference, episode, story—every encounter and physicality overlays the site-platform, viewable as a collapse of points into one presence that identifies, even revisits, its own history.

*The Cascade* extends this television-inflected space beyond Station 127 to encompass greater Los Angeles County. This landscape is a site of personal and cultural exchange—mediated through programs that were filmed in the area. As a child, I recognized the collision of my lived reality-space with the fiction of televisual time—my life was coincident with the places where television was produced. Famous programs played out in familiar environments—stores, streets, freeways and canyons; a simulacrum of my world, or a wholly present extension of it.39 This collaged, virtual landscape deflated the distance between broadcast and reality, in some ways nullifying the distinction. Theorist Alfred Shutz suggests—there are “multiple realities” in our life-worlds (Shutz, qted. in Buonanno 75); media-inflected wormholes that form who we are. For Shutz, “TV’s imaginary worlds flow with everyday life; it blurs separateness between orders of reality.” (77). The TV-mediated landscape becomes a permeating condition,

39 Scholar Lucy Lippard describes the “lure of the local” where “crucial connections of life and history with memory can contextualize place with added meaning” (Lippard qted. in Ryan 3). This relates to the idea of storied detail, emphasizing the “relationship between the measurements of its space and the events of its past” (Tufte 38).
extending a system of interpretive micro and macro\textsuperscript{40} relationships made possible by telescoping elasticity.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{40}Edward Tufte describes macro and micro readings using a street-view map of New York to illustrate the viewer-activated phenomena of generating “individual stories about… data” (Tufte 37). Someone who lives in the city would have extended micro readings of the street view map: shops visited, favorite restaurants, perhaps even identifying big picture life-event locations. The map contains layers of theoretical information applied by the viewer, which varies dramatically between individuals. A tourist might also have micro readings of a macro map, as would someone familiar with a setting via movies or TV. Someone who had never been there and knew nothing of the setting would have a broader, macro understanding of the map as data. This kind of extended context allows for what Tufte calls “storied detail” (38).

\textsuperscript{41}The impact of media-memory on site is a textured, multi-faceted web that affects those who live/d in the depicted spaces, as well as those who only know it through television, including individuals mentioned in this paper. Scholar Jan Verwoert suggests the “…increased power of capitalist commodity culture to determine the shape of our daily reality” affects our internal, social and cultural selves—and television is a major player (148). In fact, the impact of commodity culture on the self is what allows appropriation to remain relevant “as a critical (art) practice” in relation to a reality “constituted by a multiplicity of spatialized temporalities” (Verwoert 149).
To unpack this spiral, I investigated a number of contemporary artists\(^{42}\) also concerned with aspects of site, media and memory. Media duo Jennifer & Kevin McCoy investigate this telescoping subtext in *Learning from Las Vegas* (2003)(Fig. 6), culling individual clips from 21 different films which use Las Vegas, Nevada as a geographic-specific location. Moments are arranged based on a typological archive, which filters cultural artifacts into categories with implied (or re-contextualized) meaning based on

\(^{42}\) Other relevant artists that place my work in a contemporary context, and who informed my treatment of media-inflected space, include Matthew Brandt, Cory Arcangel, Julie Mehretu, Cai Guo Qiang and Jessica Angel.
their relationship to Las Vegas, both site and idea—as “lessons learnt from or about the city of Las Vegas…” (McCoy).\textsuperscript{43} The material is treated as qualified regardless of the fictional or scripted nature of the source, and it forms a collective, mosaic ‘photograph’ of Las Vegas, conflating fiction and reality, meaning and meaninglessness. It is as if Las Vegas, as a site, imparts an inspired, active philosophy—teaching interconnected (even questionable or formulaic) lessons across media-space. The iconic location and its specter-like presence provides a mythologized understanding of both self and place, deflating the difference between what we expect Las Vegas to be like and what it is like, neither of which is based in actuality. The project, installed as a series of video discs with screens, allows users to access specific ‘lessons,’ which are drawn from a suitcase-packed archive.

Video works from The Cascade deal with this telescoping effect via loops and montage, tackling the fusion and fracture of landscape as it encounters the language of television. My videos sample footage from a handful of programs filmed in LA County.\textsuperscript{44} I cross-reference actual locations, like the fire station, excavating instances of city and desert, action and interaction, interior and exterior, in order to collapse, condense and entangle sequences that defy narrative resolution. This also lays the hunting ground for

\textsuperscript{43} Categories include “learning to make friends,” “learning from the desert” and “learning to eat” (McCoy).

\textsuperscript{44} There is a massive amount of material filmed in this area. I narrowed the potential list to better suit my concept and personal connection: selected programs had to be filmed in Los Angeles County during the 1960s, 1970s or 1980s (the heyday of LA County as the seat of American television). They had to be programs I originally watched in their first run, or in syndication during the 1970s-80s (in-context viewing). They had to offer an iconographic contribution to the project: paramedics, police, detectives, colors, canyons, interiors, etc. They had to be dramas (I excised sitcoms, cowboy serials and other formula early on, as the language is different) and programs I enjoyed watching. Together, the list offers a distilled, representative array, pairing highly recognizable works with obscure memory-traces. Programs include Emergency!, Adam-12, Simon & Simon, The Greatest American Hero, The Rockford Files, The A-Team, MacGyver and Knight Rider.
my ‘searchers,’ (characters and viewers) as my tumbling montage flirts with story. The images exist only as fleeting suggestions linked by place and space and my viewers become seekers in a virtual, clue-riddled field. Working within the ‘hot-and-cool media’ installation, viewers are confronted by material that requires untangling.

Figure 7. Elevator (Finding a Way Out of Here, I Hope)(2014). Ren Adams. Video

As mentioned earlier, The Cascade is interdisciplinary, composed of paintings, digital images and a series of self-contained video ‘episodes’ that play on wall-mounted TVs, including Elevator (Finding a Way out of Here, I Hope)(Figs. 7-8) and So I Asked... (Figs. 9-10). Elevator combines manipulated footage with digital stills, generating a layered, meta-referential web that refuses comfortable resolution. Firefighter-paramedics respond to a series of emergency calls, interrupted by a sequence of increasingly incomplete rescues. A cascade of stills establishes rhythm, moderate at first, but
gradually overlapping and fracturing as a rush of highways, emergency vehicles, Joshua trees and urban spaces consume the picture plane. As the rhythm intensifies, pronounced moiré patterns remind the viewer of the distance between themselves and the characters, between recording and consumption, between rescuers and victims, as panels of saturated panic-red and video-blue provide a looping torrent, suggesting the intensity of the hunt-and-rescue.

Figure 8. Stills from Elevator (Finding a Way out of Here, I Hope)(2014). Ren Adams. Video

Based on television formula, yet ruptured and re-contextualized, the viewer is bombarded by cycles: running, searching, frantic radio exchanges—vehicles hurtle from one desert-urban location to the next, passing through analogous environments, escalating viewer (and searcher) disorientation. The viewer may even suspect events are repeating and overlapping, or that time itself has slowed around a never-ending incident. The paramedics never seem able to complete the rescue, further deconstructing Hollywood

45 To intentionally produce moiré patterns that reference this collapsed-screen flatness, I use a cell phone camera with a short depth of field—another aspect of consumer convergence where every phone becomes a pseudo-Panaflex camera and every consumer becomes a ‘filmmaker.’ All of the digital stills are also produced using cell phone imagery.
heroism and leaving human incompleteness in its wake. Audio-visual arcs amplify this transience as disembodied voices trade: “where do you think you’re going?” (“finding a way out of here, I hope…”). Loops suggest recurrence, not homogeneity—information is constantly added and eroded.

Figure 9. So I Asked… (2014). Ren Adams. Video.

The time-collapse of seemingly linked events in So I Asked… (Figs. 9-10) also involve paramedic-searchers who appear to be responding to a shooting, just as Elevator grapples with overlapping, unresolved crises. The viewer experiences the distilled, unreliable essence of an hour-long drama in the timeframe of a television lead-in, heightening tension and unfolding interior-exterior conflict. Opening with our disarmed heroes caught mid-conversation (interrupted by an emergency), the interaction collides
with a rotating sequence of loops (a landing helicopter, high speed gunfight, rushing rescue vehicles). The cycles continually intertwine, intensely ghosted. Increasingly anxious, coinciding dialogue suggests “something happens, is happening, goes on happening…” (Drucker 23), though ruptured temporality suggests the ‘goes on happening’ may actually occur before the initial ‘something’ that sets off the chain. The entire process intimates our tendency to access memories via mediated reconstruction, where details are fluidly blurred and refined—we may not recall specific episodes involved in a sequence, but we reconstruct a sense of the ‘bigger picture,’ with details lost in personal lore (Foster, J. 12-14).

Figure 10. Stills from So I Asked… (2014). Ren Adams. Video.

The paramedics, however, seem to be responding to a gunfight—a pair of detectives desperately outrunning a helicopter (Fig. 10)—yet the rescuers themselves are caught in a disruptive loop that leaves the title question unasked and the rescue unresolved, though viewers can rely on their knowledge of televisual language to
determine that a rescue has been, or will be, attempted. Viewers may wonder if the two semi-stories are related at all, or if they simply occur in the same stretch of urban-desert. Without linearity, loops describe events likely to have occurred, though order and coincidence is unclear—like catching episodes out of sequence.

Thus, my recast paramedics, detectives and victims complete cycles of intertwined past and present—in this case, before, during and after attempted rescues. Super-imposed moments exist across time, in the same condensation, not across physical space, though they appear to happen in the same location. Combining the “textual openness of TV” with “associative sequencing of images,” I open a space which allows the viewer, a detective themselves, to blend an individual “polysemic, kaleidoscopic experience” from the material (Dienst 31). I emphasize the almost-narrative by allowing moments to rhythmically rebound, like the circling helicopter, dialogue, or the squad rushing to the scene—elements which, in turn, bounce into backlit digital images, or across paintings. These recoils form ‘choruses’ that seem familiar, yet constantly shift.

My videos are also influenced by the works of Zbigniew Rybczyński, including Tango (1981). In Tango, diverse characters cycle through an interior space, completing short action sequences of seemingly endless duration. As each new character enters the space, they add their tireless loop until the void is choked with bodies and events that take place in simultaneity, but which could not have occurred coincidentally (Zbigniew). Rybczyński applies a painterly touch to the oddly mechanized anti-heroes, emphasizing the unreality of the continuous moment and the presence of artist-as-mediator, logic I apply to my own work.

We are the connotative agents and we are the media detectives (Fiske 41). I watched The Office as a non-sequential re-broadcast, which made no attempt to present linearity. Instead, I pieced together various relationships by seeing events out of turn. The overall mosaic offered a smattering of details that came into focus only after viewing each puzzle piece as I could collect them—as if I were a detective gathering clues. I thought of this as a critical motive when constructing my videos, as this is often the case with shows in re-rerun, or for viewers who miss a week’s installment. We understand television as mosaic, and we know how to complete it (Fiske 123)(McLuhan 292). This process also suggests the recollection of fact-or-fictive story from memory-pieces.

Jean Baudrillard suggests TV itself is a “succession of instants” (qtd in Dienst 162).
offering an understanding of events only by viewing a mosaic of remixed behaviors. The site becomes active and by blending specificity and abstraction, I allow certain characters and locations to emerge fully formed, others to remain elusive. Viewers may sense the heroes are plagued by doubt, hunted and chased, searching and fruitless—further de-centering Hollywood perfection.

The videos attempt a kind of hybrid memory experience; history interceded by television. Because we understand how to ‘read’ television, viewers may identify (or suspect) purposeful fracture and connection, even sorting out who might be the hero and victim, or that either needs identification at all (Fiske 16). It is not necessary for viewers to recognize specific remixed footage, as cultural familiarity with television allows them to establish a system (however unstable) of latent content via audience expectation (Fiske 62, 87).

49 Other videos in the installation, including Ambush, Rental (Requesting Backup), Secret Air Base and Chase contain character types not specifically expanded in this paper, including police, mercenaries, soldiers of fortune and vigilantes, all hunters and seekers and therefore all tied to the sourcing and digestion of seemingly innocuous clues, informed by inherited oral tradition (Ginzburg 13). Of course, sourcing more obscure television also ensures a level of ambiguity, though the formulaic essence remains, even for viewers unfamiliar with the original programs (Fiske 17). This also relates to media theorist Andrew Darley’s idea that television genre and formula “have been turned into historical signifiers, and as such they become… additions to the storehouse of styles and figures, or objects of pastiche and allusion: further elements for the surface play that constitutes contemporary visual culture” (144)—my use is definitely part pastiche, part allusion, part remix.

50 Other artists with critical impact on my video work, not covered here due to spatial constraints, include Anthony Discenza, DJ Spooky, Tamás Waliczky, Len Lye, Jeremy Blake, Chris Marker, Hans Richter, Redmond Entwistle and Jack Goldstein.

51—or even determining there is a difference between roles.
While videos offer one entrance into telescoping space, still images provide another. Artist Cynthia Beth Rubin uses digital layering and variable perspective to disrupt the predictability of landscape, delivering a collapsed sense of socio-geographic history. In *Old House...* (1998) (Fig. 11), the Slovakian summer home of Marie Antoinette is enmeshed with the artist’s personal visit to the site, resulting in a telescoping engagement. Remixed, vertical elements simultaneously collapse points in history (and temporality) into tangled overlays which suggest abandonment. Garish color saturates the shingles and foliage, simultaneously recalling the architecture’s heyday, while suggesting the time-stamp of 20th century tech. This temporal pliability carries into the loose, interpretive manner of Rubin’s perspective. A pool of dates, stories and
histories become intertwined—conceptually expressed as entangled, transparent and colliding digital moments in a fractured, elastic space. Enough of the building’s façade remains visible in the tumult that informed viewers can even recognize the specific site (Rubin). Rubin’s digital articulation of this telescoping space heavily influences The Cascade’s core.

![Figure 12. Pearblossom Highway, 11-18 of April, #2 (1986). David Hockney.](image)

Chromogenic print. 71 ½” x 107”

David Hockney’s Pearblossom Highway (1986)(Fig. 12) also makes use of this literal and conceptual memory-space through a mosaic of individual photographs taken

52 Just as in my use of historical television, certain viewers might recognize the source material, but recognition is not necessary to get a sense of past-present-future, or place and event.

53 The core of the project is an ongoing archive of digital images, screen captures, manipulations and video materials, many of which are informed by artists like Cynthia Beth Rubin, Annette Weintraub and Oliver Wasow.
on a drive through the Mojave Desert. Hockney took the photos over several days and across the length of Highway 138 in Los Angeles County. The texture, color and urban intercession are present in both the strangely entangled, yet sparsely inhabited, photographs and the overlaid, indistinct mountain range. There is a pervading sense of location and dislocation, and unlike Rubin, Hockney reassembles his story from bits and pieces of lived, invented and remembered experience, like a convergence-hunter\textsuperscript{54} using media to assemble cultural truthiness (Gottschall 290). This piece proved important in centering my own work, as it offers another mode of describing telescoping space, a condensation of the nearly interchangeable nature of the desert along Highway 138—and the variable perceptions of viewers who encounter it (“Pearblossom Hwy…”). The right side compresses a sequence of street signs. The left offers a closer glimpse of trash and Joshua trees, framed and back-dropped by homogenous desert patches as the viewer moves toward civilization. The individual’s reaction to the desert, and their memory of the trip (or any road trip) is derived from culling and assembling memory-snaps, just as in television viewing. One could refer to Hockney’s pool of photographs as an archive of moments extracted from the idea of \textit{journey-through-space} itself.

The separate location shots culled from television filmed (not coincidentally) in this same region also reference what seems disparate points, but which converge into their own mosaic, processed through media and individual perspective. I lived at different points along Pearblossom Highway from the 70s-90s, so Hockney’s photo carries Edward Tufte’s idea of storied detail and naturally articulates \textit{The Cascade’s} telescoping media-

\textsuperscript{54} As Henry Jenkins says, “convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers—[we] construct our own personal mythologies…” and understandings of events and media (3).
memory state. It commodifies space as a unit ‘owned' by the passing traveler or ingrained local, gathering recorded memories as they move.\(^5^5\) Theorist Carlo Ginzburg suggests hunter-gatherers lived by interpreting and associating seemingly innocuous clues and their inherited knowledge was part of oral tradition, allowing divergent facts to become revealing sequences (13).\(^5^6\) In this way, the very act of taking a road trip, or documenting interactions with site and memory, becomes an interdisciplinary, semi-narrative process of collecting and observing bits that suggest a whole (Ginzburg 22).

My use of similar memory-snap mosaics informs the *Cascade* paintings, an important counterpoint to the digital work. The paintings warm up the installation by contributing a ‘hot media’ element to the cool televisual language. Since paintings were once a dominant, transmissive medium, they offer an alternative method of observing and condensing space-time. By opening a dialectical space that addresses the difference between seeing and consuming, they question the very meaning of hot-and-cool.\(^5^7\) Where

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55 In much the way televisual, religious and folkloric characters are ‘owned’ by the listener-curator, joined with memory (blended indiscriminately with the fictive and the factual), reoriented and recalled through the personal filter of the convergence-hunter. Some television theorists suggest “once characters are inserted into popular discourse, regardless of their source of origin, they become the property of fans who fantasize about them…” (476).

56 Scholar-artist Paul Miller (DJ Spooky) suggests the Information Age paradigm is fundamentally a form of DJ culture, ordered by degrees of “collective ownership,” “systems of memory” and “database logic” (Miller). This fluid, sample-driven environment allows “users” to combine personal and cultural material as part of a semantic engagement with life itself, not simply media and popular culture—though our personal convergence-hunting is based on familiar texts and memories that “rise to prominence” in the creation of personal-mythological stories.

57 Though Marshall McLuhan’s theory suggests media like paintings are hot, delivering a continuous, high def experience, one can argue that paintings may straddle an in–between state, where the literal ‘heat’ of the artist is present in the manipulated surface and concepts and where visually or spatially complicated paintings take longer to unravel, demanding more of the viewer (Apesos). Paintings, like television, can thus occupy both kinds of media engagement. This ambiguity is central to *The Cascade*, where I hope the viewer will question what it means to receive and engage, even if they are unfamiliar with hot-and-cool media theory.
The videos are disorienting, panicked and rapid-fire, time slows down in the paintings—a snow globe of telescoping events suspended, by way of intersecting lines and color fields, like Hockney’s disjointed, multifarious desert.58

The paintings collapse time and a sequence of (potentially) interrelated events that play out in dramatic urban-desert environments. Anxious planar intrusions fracture perspective, suggesting various moments (and locations) are witnessed simultaneously.59

Thus, the paintings provide ambiguous space, offering a frozen, yet movement-suggestive window that complicates the adventures of my hunters.60 Rendered with washy acrylic and watercolor on absorbent paper, a system of matte veils obscure as much as they communicate. The paintings, as in Hockney’s collage, provide a different mode of layered storytelling.61

58 The View-Masters also fall somewhere between, with pacing and consumption determined by the will of the viewer and the physical restriction of the unit.

59 …recalling my digital influences, including Annette Weintraub and Jennifer Kamp. The paintings are also heavily influenced by Analytic Cubism and Futurism, especially the works of Georges Braque, Umberto Boccioni, Alberto Giacometti, Kazimir Malevich and Lyonel Feininger, not discussed here due to spatial constraints. In each case, I considered the way the artist fractured and reoriented space, perspective and suggested ‘action’ across (and through) overlaid time and technology. Umberto Boccioni attends to the transitory nature of locomotion, emotion and human contact in series like States of Mind I-III (1911). He engages a train station’s overlapping arrivals and departures, and the spiral of emotion, technology and time that punches through the site, via an anti-perspectival condensation. States of Mind “explores the psychological dimension of modern life's transitory nature” (MOMA).

60 Theorist Walter Benjamin “uses a real landscape and a painting as examples of what is natural for human perception. This natural state is invaded by film, which collapses distance, bringing everything equally close...” (Manovich, “Cinema and Telecommunication”).

61 TV is constructed “by combining forces of stilling and extending time,” (Dienst 163), just as my installation attempts to manipulate the flow of time within each medium as a meditation on televisual engagement.
Roy and the Mojave Subsequence (Fig. 13), provides a time-collapsed site of panic, as the typically reflective, ‘beautiful’ horizontal landscape is intruded upon by a state of emergency. Roads intertwine and overlay industrial structures, desert topography—an impossible web that resists decoding. There is a sense of pervading violence\textsuperscript{62}—the car culture of Los Angeles and its race toward physical ruin occupies a sense of real, lived space, where industry and accident fuse with topography. Co-existent perspectives collide, as industrial enclaves meet Joshua trees and distant desert fires, marking at least three separate planar intrusions. In the lower right, our iconographic

\textsuperscript{62} Though it is Hollywood violence, color-saturated, mediated and fantastic.
searcher, Roy, passes through two moments of contemplation, moving through space and addressing, or considering, the conclusion of events. The detailed Roy suggests vitality in the present moment, and the ghosted, leaning incarnation, attending to a half-materialized patient on the roadway, offers a sense of time and thought displacement. Figures participate in, and are surrounded by, a suggestion of ongoing events, blurring the acted-upon, the reflected and the possible.

![Figure 14. How Johnny Discovered the Secret Air Base (2014). Ren Adams. Acrylic, watercolor and ink on Lenox 100 paper. 38” x 50”](image)

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63 Roy is one of my deconstructed heroes, returning cross-media as a recast archetype and aesthetic element.
In *How Johnny Discovered the Secret Air Base* (Fig. 14), Hollywood specificity is diminished, yet viewers identify the blue and red of heroes from my cross-media ‘episodes,’ and the saturated yellow-pink of the interchangeable desert. The splintered site is internal, external, abstract, concrete—an undeniably fictional state that only exists in paint. The literalness of the hand allows for an expansion into the *occupation* of landscape, the TV world and its place in individual memory. Strange blue layers suggest reflected light on glass, or video-blue intrusions (like television cross-fades), as faces, arms, vehicles, lights and buildings alternately dissolve and reform. Layers suggest time, but instability and contingency speak to the unreliable memory and Hollywood fabrication. Contrasting elements provide a simulacrum of the micro-macro read of television—and entry into the picture space is challenging.

Thus, I play on theorist Margaret Sundell’s suggestion that “we encounter the struggle to represent what it might be like to momentarily inhabit the gap between an object’s existence and our ability to pin it down” (qtd. in Farr 21). Reminding viewers that for every act of recollection, every fictional performance, there is a physical and experiential subtext—and that media affect our understanding of history, myth, location and identity.65

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64 The macro read is akin to watching and understanding the program on a broader level—as a crime or medical drama, with a system of characters and formulas. The micro might include who you watched the programs with, your familiarity with the actual locations represented in the fictive space, or memories of characters and events, interwoven with your response to the work and your navigation of daily life through culture.

65 YouTube user Jorge Reyes posted a relevant comment on another fan’s documentary of their media pilgrimage to Station 127: “my parents purchased a 1974 Nova at Cormier Chevrolet, and one morning (sometime in the mid 1970's) my brother and I accompanied my father to the dealer for car service. I suggested to my brother (I was about thirteen years old, and he was around eleven.) to go for a walk
Haunted Temporality: The Loop as Semi-Narrative Engine

_The Cascade_ installation manipulates the looping, mosaic nature of televisual structure to amplify viewer engagement. Loops are powerful invocations, abandoning linear narrative for the intensity of a continuous present. Lev Manovich suggests they are actually “a new narrative form appropriate for the computer age,” even as loops occupy a liminal, anti-narrative space between story and instance (Manovich, “The Language…” xxxiii).

The loop also describes the nature of television and the cyclical process of memory-impression. Since TV reveals its ideas, characters and events as mosaics (Fiske 125), circling segments become intertextual references, suggesting the repetitive around the corner, and we encountered the station looking exactly like the one in the program, and as a firefighter drove in, apparently reporting for duty, I confirmed with him that it was the Emergency station, but it was not Station 51; it was Station 127. I still have the two 110 Kodak film prints, and negatives, that I took that day (I happened to have my Kodak "Hawkeye" 110 camera with me that morning, and I still have that little camera to this day); one shows my brother in front of the station, and the other is of the refinery-type structures across the street visible on some program exterior scenes.”

Reyes’ account ties childhood experiences to a system of documentation and confirmation, planting then-contemporary experiences with a show he was familiar with, still currently watching, and which, years later, still stirs site-based recollection connected to memory.

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66 Theorist Lev Manovich describes loops in a new media context as a new kind of temporality, a contemporary narrative form (“The Language…” 314). I extend this idea to serve semi-narrative spaces.

67 Theorist Bruno Latour suggests: “connecting images to images, playing with series of them, repeating them, reproducing them, distorting them slightly, has been common practice in art even before the infamous ‘age of mechanical reproduction.’ ‘Intertextuality’ is one of the ways in which the cascading of images is discernible in the artistic domain – the thick entangled connection that each image has with all the others that have been produced” (Latour 35).
structure of programming. The re-use of stock footage, for example, provides punctuation that links meaning across, and through, the visual montage.68

Television integrates, even centralizes, loops for episodic development—including systems of re-run, re-make69 and consumption.70 Loops similarly inform The Cascade, as moments and elements circulate between hot-and-cool media ‘screens.’ The videos demonstrate obvious loops, but cycles are central to unfolding time in the paintings and crucial to the View-Masters and audio—the framework suggests an endless cascade (Latour 35). Viewers enter the installation, invoking their “inner Holmes”; they hunt clues that lead to meaning by looping between media (Ginzburg 1232).

Thus, loops offer an alternative narrative structure in which repetition prevents a clear understanding of beginning, middle and end (as in So I Asked… or Roy and the Mojave Subsequence).71 Looping stock footage itself may contribute to story, but is actually a collapsed, or excised, unit of time, without intrinsic narrative—designed to

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68 Theorist Jonathan Gottschall claims “our hunger for meaningful patterns translates into a hunger for story” (124).

69 Media theorist Richard Dienst claims television endlessly cuts away from program moments to return to the “traffic of images and sounds, to all the messages carried by all the messengers crossing through the world” (129). This creates a cascading loop of program-commercial-program-commercial.

70 Artist Nam June Paik echoes television theorists when he suggests “the fundamental concept of TV is time…” (Dienst 159). Television is recorded, produced, cut and offered in terms of time, so time is not only a fundamental concept, but also the fundamental shape of television. The familiar loops we encounter in viewing owe much to the backbone of the medium. Thus, “time is the substance of television's visuality, the ground of its ontology and the currency of its economy” (Dienst 159).

71 If each individual hosts an inner detective that craves story, certainty and meaning, it challenges our myth-making skills when we encounter instability and semi-narrative. “If the storytelling mind cannot find meaningful patterns in the world, it will try to impose them,” drawing from an inner library of personally-sourced material, factual and fictional, to supply and sort the dreamlike situation (Gottschall 1232). Each piece of information, each conflated memory-fact, becomes a clue that can inform interior and exterior situations (Gottschall 1270).
transition primary material. Repetition also suggests the endless process of search and rescue, though action sequences and establishing shots form a kind of non-linear temporality (Birnbaum 135), resurfacing across multiple episodes, yet the “narrative does not proceed as simple causality” (Birnbaum 137). All aspects of The Cascade refer, in some way, to this kind of B-roll loop. Though the story seems to move forward because heroes rush to the scene, the act of rushing is divorced and intertwined with the “indiscernibility of the real and the imaginary, or of the present and the past, of the actual and the virtual...” (Farr 23).

Figure 15. In the Dream of the Planet (2012). Claudia X. Valdes. Video (Installation View).

Stock footage sequences from Emergency! and Adam 12 exemplify this pre-recorded, circular universe, as vehicles travel to and from their headquarters, to the site of emergencies and back—B-roll that repeats to the point of patterning.
Contemporary artists also use loops, as in Douglas Gordon's 24 Hour Psycho. Cory Arcangel's Clouds (2002) or Stan Douglas' Overture (1986). In each, the loop considers the nature of time and the relationship between the reinvented continuous and the discrete, to see multiple potentialities simultaneously and to establish formal and conceptual rhythm, as in Claudia X. Valdes' In the Dream of the Planet (2002). Valdes appropriates made-for-TV-movie The Day After (1983), compressing the two-hour film into a 56-second loop. The loop is repeated six times in rapid succession, with each incarnation skewed to emphasize an aspect of Cold War anxiety. The Day After grapples with a nuclear escalation between the United States and the Soviet Union, culminating in full-scale nuclear war. Valdes appropriates this engagement, employing intense cycles and 'reincarnated' excerpts to direct viewer interpretation, reinforcing Cold War causalities. In her condensation, images first hurtle past, allowing frantic glimpses, slowing with terrifying agony as missiles launch and buildings melt—distilling the doom of the original into a frenetic, semi-narrative commentary. The painfully recognizable, yet

73 Gordon's installation incorporates two projection screens which simultaneously play an endless loop of Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho (1960), one proceeding forward, the other backward. The loops move at only a few frames per second—so slowly that casual viewers may not recognize change or directional progression at all. Longer consideration reveals the unnerving and crystallized sense of frozen (yet endlessly progressing) cinematic time, prolonging terror, anxiety and media-informed anticipation.

74 Arcangel's Clouds, a new media projection, is endlessly rebuilt in real time from a modified Super Nintendo game cartridge. The background clouds from Super Mario Brothers provide an infinite, fabricated loop. This treatment of 'landscape' as a space of digital geography endlessly recreates itself in the scope of its own progression.

In Stan Douglas' piece, a 16mm Edison promotional film is looped under a narration from Proust. In the cycle, a train curves through a British Columbian landscape in an infinite circle. The voice-over contemplates the transition from waking to sleeping, echoed in the monotony of the endless train ride. The loop is not immediately recognizable, yet as the film progresses through a 6 minute course—the viewer realizes the train is passing through the same terrain, just as our minds do during the process of recollection. Here, the loop offhandedly illustrates the philosophy of Proust's memory-grooves.
unreliable loop incites a state of hyper-arousal that parallels nuclear paranoia. Valdes’ distillation of the movie’s anxiety through her own critical emphasis is an excellent example of the haunted loop, which refers to, and reenacts, its own apparitional forms. This is relevant to the distillation of action and interaction in *The Cascade*.75

Intense repetition reinforces the experience of an immediate, unyielding present, both in terms of ‘story’ and reception (Manovich, “The Language…” 315)(Farr 23). The moments-after transition suggests: “time flows and each present fades but doesn't disappear” (Birnbaum 139),76 as in Valdes’ piece, and my referenced stock footage.77 Thus, loops access the weird familiarity of television and its rapid-fire montage78 and

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75 The telescoping stages of video are a kind of loop: the time of the original filming, editorial time, postproduction, the immediate present of the viewer, the viewer's present-into-past transition and the after-processing (and any subsequent recollection).

76 *So I Asked...* (and other *Cascade* videos) may even behave as fragmentary, fragile archives—bound by our desire to sort out the phenomena of ‘haunting,’ and the activation of memory that occurs with reappearance (Farr 12).

77 My videos reference the looping stock footage of the appropriated television programs. Loops invoke re-enactment, whether suggesting repeat activities or behaving as discrete forms in themselves. Thus, they recall previous stories, suggest future adventures, dance with narrative, but deny closure. By overturning cultural expectations of narrative progress, the videos undermine the process of viewing we are most familiar with (Boyd).

78 Temporal montage links separate realities (or discrete images) in order “to form consecutive moments in time,” while “montage within a shot” uses “separate realities [to] form contingent parts of a single image” (Manovich, “The Language…” xvii, 148). Filmmaker Dziga Vertov made proficient use of “montage within a shot” to superimpose hyper-real, layered structures, which in turn generate a non-indexical suggestion of reality: the environments he creates may appear to document fact, but in many cases could not have physically occurred in real space—even though the viewer can interpret that such events could have occurred across time, in the same space (Manovich, “The Language…” xviii). This approach had tremendous impact on the *The Cascade.*
provide critical negotiation of televiual structure and the ways we commit and recall
memory-images. In fact, my entire installation is an expanded loop-form itself.

View-Masters are a technologically simple version of the loop View-Masters are hand-held, plastic stereoscopic image viewers which use paper or plastic reels.

79 Theorists Paul Ricoeur and Jean-Paul Sartre suggest the uncanny, layered experience of memory is a process part logic, part hallucinatory. Ricoeur applies some of Henri Bergson’s memory theory, when interpreting Sartre’s psychology of imagination by describing a kind of intermediary memory as a mixed state, where “the ‘memory-image’ [is] halfway between ‘pure memory’ and memory reinscribed in perception” (Farr 14). The memory-image, or mixed media we construct in our minds, is never wholly factual, or entirely reliable, instead a play between the imaginary and conscious, between the interpreted and the understood.

80 The format provides a relevant, interactive method of negotiating my archive of digital stills, especially as View-Masters have been a popular way of dimensionalizing television, landscape and vacation photography (site as participatory culture) for decades. View-Masters are hand-held, plastic stereoscopic image viewers which use paper or plastic reels.
narrative. Each window is layered, detached from story via suspension in artificial space. Each image, in turn, becomes a clue. In *Mojave Superchase* (Fig. 16), our gun-toting detectives face off against a villainous helicopter, serving as an extraction of *So I Asked*.... The detectives engage intruding, threatening shapes and figures, enduring a circular chase. Indistinct moments are mined from an event which has collapsed in on itself and the intensity of video blue and yellow-green refuse dénouement: intense repetition suggests our heroes never escape.81

Where the videos and paintings assert the truthiness of television as a ‘real’ environment—the View-Masters are one step removed; commodities of the commodity, memories of the media, distanced as hand-driven constructions, fictive spaces that draw on the ‘realism’ of the broadcast and the fact-fiction hybrid of the digital. If the “medium is the message” (McLuhan 9) the View-Masters are its distillation.

I also deploy semi-narrative loops in the *Cascade’s* audio. Though tied to videos, my soundscape is intended to be ‘overheard’ in the context of the installation. 82 A tense,
tangled remix collapses time, with overlapping voices, sirens, klaxon tones and gunshots. Television theorists suggest sound is crucial to television (Buonanno 37-38) and sudden audio changes draw viewers back into the screen (Dienst 29-30). It is impossible for the viewer experiencing the installation to pick up a View-Master and click through reels without overhearing audio. A viewer observing the paintings perceives the disembodied voices of characters recast in paint, amplifying engagement with the endless search; the viewer cannot help but relate audio to the anxiety of the installation. In this way, material resurfaces—changes weave back to an original point of encounter, shifting and folding with each medium. The result is a compression of moments, a suspension of interactions, a doubtful resolution and a change of distance between episodes and moments.

Conclusion

The Cascade extends the televisual experience into three dimensions, bringing it off the screen into lived, experiential space. Components function as individual works, yet are viewed in an installation context, offering viewers the role of convergence-hunter. A vulnerable cast of heroes share the viewer’s hunt, gathering clues from a semi-narrative spanning paintings, video, View-Masters and audio. Viewers and characters travel between media, events and their reinterpretation, never able to resolve the semi-story.

83 My semi-narratives focus on anxiety and panic—an amplification of media and late modernity. Including cycles of crisis allows our trouble-seeking mirror neurons to empathize with fictional characters and to enter a space where our brains do not differentiate between fact/fiction (Gottschall 764). Neuroscientists suggest our minds seek, extrapolate and learn from trouble, thus our inner detectives seek and modulate it (Gottschall 590).
The installation thus offers a dialectic of flatness and depth, a mix of hot-and-cool, with each component contributing (or stripping) a sense of elastic-space.

As TV-primed story-detectives, viewers attempt to sort meaning from this disorienting, even anxious, media-site (Gottschall 1060, 1232). The human affinity to assemble clues (drawn from fiction or ‘reality,’ mixed indiscriminately) speaks to the way story “shapes our beliefs, behaviors ethics—how it powerfully modifies culture and history” (Gottschall 93) and to the way it becomes part of our working memory-experience. This is the hyper-reality of Fire Station 127 and the nature of an Information Age existence: “our lives, relationships, memories, fantasies, desires also flow across media channels” (Jenkins 17) and we play DJ with the media that form our daily lives.

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84 Historian Simon Schama suggests: “landscape [itself] is a work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock” (7), just as human stories and memories are constructed of layered clues (Gottschall 293).
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